



e-UPDATE #114 - 15.11.22

Welcome to this update!

Some sad news to begin with: I was deeply shocked to hear that **Lord Nigel Jones** - Cheltenham's former MP - had died. Nigel was decent and principled and came into politics for all the right reasons. He served our town for thirteen years as MP before entering the House of Lords, and was widely liked. I am thinking of his family, and the local Liberal Democrat party, who I know will be reeling from this news. It takes guts to go into politics, and I hope they will take comfort from knowing that his contribution to our town is respected and appreciated. Although the papers have focused on the dreadful attack in 2000, he deserves to be remembered for far, far more.

There is an update below about **Stagecoach** and its plans to provide a more reliable service (sorely, sorely needed). I have been clear with the Stagecoach MD that **vulnerable passengers must not be left high and dry.**

There is positive news on Cheltenham being awarded **£2 million in Government cash** from the Arts Council Levelling Up Fund. **The Everyman, Cheltenham Festivals and Create Gloucestershire** will all benefit, as part of a drive to ensure that funding is not hoarded in London, but instead supports culture across our country.

There are also updates below about my first few weeks as **Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence**, including a recent visit to **NTC Fort Irwin, USA** to meet with British troops and to learn more about steps taken to integrate cutting-edge technology. In future, gathering data won't be the challenge - *managing* it will.

There's also good news for community groups and organisations in **St Mark's and St Paul's** who can now apply for a share of the **£1.5 million Gloucestershire Levelling Up Together Fund.**

There's a '**grot spot**' update too of course!

Thank you for reading.

Best wishes,

Alex

PS There are some photos below from the Remembrance Day service in Cheltenham. Another huge

turnout from the town - a source of great pride for us all.

Alex Chalk KC MP
Member of Parliament for Cheltenham
Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence

REMEMBRANCE



[Laying a wreath at the memorial in Cheltenham]



[Cheltenham's Remembrance Day service]



[Selling poppies with the Royal British Legion]



[Planting a Remembrance tribute in Parliament]



The Right Honourable Alex Chalk MP

[Reading the Kohima Epitaph at the National Memorial Arboretum]



[At Cheltenham Spa Station for #PoppiesToPaddington]

ALEX PAYS TRIBUTE TO CHELTENHAM'S FALLEN

To mark Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday, Alex attended a number of events on Cheltenham's behalf.

As well as attending [Cheltenham's Remembrance Day service](#), Alex also planted a Remembrance cross in Parliament and sold poppies with the Royal British Legion.

Alex also laid a wreath on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and read the Kohima Epitaph at the [Armistice Day service at the National Memorial Arboretum](#).

Writing on Facebook, Alex said:

"Another fantastic turnout in Cheltenham for Remembrance Sunday. Great to see serving personnel, veterans and cadets all out in force.

"Never let us forget that over 1,000 soldiers, sailors and aviators from our town gave their lives in the First World War (from a total population of less than 60,000). Their sacrifice, and that of the many others who fell in subsequent conflicts in the service of our country, will never be forgotten."

UPDATES



"VULNERABLE PASSENGERS MUST NOT BE LEFT HIGH AND DRY"

Alex has robustly challenged Stagecoach's Managing Director about the poor bus service in Cheltenham.

Stagecoach have now published an action plan detailing how they can restructure to continue to provide a reliable service. This will involve a number of route changes.

Alex has been clear that **vulnerable passengers and key arterial routes should not be left without access to an adequate bus service**. He has also been clear that **access to the hospital during visiting hours crucially must be retained**.

For the routes that Stagecoach is withdrawing, Alex is encouraged that **Gloucestershire County Council are putting replacement routes out to tender**, such as the 93 and F service. It is expected that this route will be picked up by another provider:

Alex has asked Stagecoach to publish more information on the alternative routes that those affected will be able to use instead.

You can read Alex's full statement about Stagecoach by clicking [HERE](#).



£2 MILLION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE ARTS IN CHELTENHAM

Alex has welcomed news that the Government through the Arts Council, has agreed to invest a further **two million pounds into Cheltenham's cultural sector.**

Cheltenham Festivals, the Everyman and Create Gloucestershire will all share in cash which is designed to target support to the regions of the UK, rather than the traditional destination of London.

The money comes on top of the £4 million-plus that we received from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund during and after lockdown, without which much of our best loved organisations would likely have collapsed.

Alex said: "The performing arts are not a 'nice to have'; they are an essential pillar of our country's economy, and help underpin the UK's economic, political and cultural influence abroad.

"The funding means greater opportunity for children from all across Cheltenham to benefit from the great gifts of art, theatre, music and literature. Long may that continue."



The King has been pleased to approve the following appointments:

- Alex Chalk KC MP as a Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence;

ALEX APPOINTED AS MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Alex has been appointed by the Prime Minister as **Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence**.

The responsibilities of the role include delivery of the **MOD equipment plan, science and technology, defence exports and nuclear enterprise**.

Following his appointment, Alex said:

"I am honoured to have been asked to serve as the Minister for Defence Procurement in the Ministry of Defence.

*"It's a complex brief, and I'm conscious of course that I am taking it on at an important time for national and international security. I will serve to the best of my ability, and I look forward to doing so alongside my many **Cheltenham** constituents who already play such a central role in keeping our country safe."*

To read more about Alex's appointment, please click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).



Image:

Earlier this afternoon, Sir Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 Committee, announced that Rishi Sunak will become the new leader of the Conservative party.

ALEX WELCOMES THE APPOINTMENT OF RISHI SUNAK AS PRIME MINISTER

Alex was in Committee Room 14 in the House of Commons as Rishi Sunak was announced as the new Prime Minister.

Alex said: "I welcome Rishi Sunak's appointment as Prime Minister. Already he has set a tone of professionalism and candour – exactly what our country needs as it addresses a profound economic crisis.

"All nations are facing difficulties following the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. What matters now is how we respond. In Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister and Jeremy Hunt as Chancellor our country has two experienced and professional figures who I expect to address the task ahead with competence, calmness and resolve."



ST MARK'S AND ST PAUL'S TO BENEFIT FROM £1.5 MILLION GLOUCESTERSHIRE 'LEVELLING UP TOGETHER' FUND

Alex was drawn into politics by a passion to **boost life chances for people** from all walks of life in Cheltenham. This was the driving mission behind Alex's cyber vision.

So Alex has welcomed GCC's announcement **of a £1.5million Levelling Up Together grant scheme** for the areas in Gloucestershire that are in the bottom decile of income per capita nationally.

The fund means that **community groups and organisations in St. Mark's and St Paul's can apply for a share of the £1.5million** for projects that will **improve wellbeing, skills and employability** for those who live in these areas.

Alex said: *"I believe passionately in levelling up Cheltenham. Long before it was being talked about nationally, I spoke about the urgent moral mission to spread opportunity in our town. So I welcome GCC's introduction of a £1.5million grant scheme to spread opportunity and to provide a better future for people all across Cheltenham."*

To learn more, please click [HERE](#).



ALEX PLEDGES TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CHELTENHAM BUSINESSES

Alex was invited by **Circle2Success** - a leadership and networking organisation for Cheltenham based businesses - to be the keynote speaker at its '**Big Conversation: Cost of Living**' event.

Alex **reaffirmed his commitment to supporting Cheltenham's businesses** who continue to face significant financial pressures.

Alex updated the group on his recent meeting with the Chancellor in which he made clear that having survived the 'war' of Covid, that businesses in Cheltenham **need support to build up their strength** during the 'peace' of the post-pandemic phase.

Alex continues to meet business owners in Cheltenham so that he can deploy further '**frontline**' examples of the pressures facing local businesses to enable him to **fight their corner in Parliament**.

If you are a business owner and would like to discuss this further with Alex, please email alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk



ALEX AT THE DESPATCH BOX FOR THE FIRST TIME AS DEFENCE MINISTER

Alex was at the despatch box for the first time since being appointed as Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.

Alex reiterated how the MOD's continued investment in defence will contribute to further economic growth, jobs and prosperity across the Union.

To watch the session, please click [HERE](#).



ALEX JOINS THE RUN FOR UKRAINE

Alex was pleased to join hundreds of Cheltonians at the Run for Ukraine.

The event - which took place at Pittville Park - raised money for British Ukrainian Aid and United Help Ukraine who provide medical and humanitarian support to the people of Ukraine.

With over 500 participants, runners collectively ran the distance between the UK and Ukraine.





APPLE DAY AT PILLEY BRIDGE NATURE RESERVE

Alex was delighted to join the Apple Day celebrations at **Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve**.

The celebrations included 'railway rides' under Pilley Bridge, a performance by the Music Man and a range of craft, nature and apple-based activities.

Writing on Facebook, Alex said:

"Great to have Cheltenham's own Music Man entertaining families in Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve last weekend! Thanks to the organisers for a hugely successful day!"

For more information about Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve, please click [HERE](#).



ALEX MEETS BRITISH TROOPS IN NTC FORT IRWIN, USA

Alex visited **NTC Fort Irwin, USA** to meet with British troops and to learn more about the **integration of cutting-edge technology** as part of Project Convergence 2022.

Project Convergence 2022 examines how using artificial intelligence, robotics and autonomy can improve battlefield situational awareness, connecting sensors with shooters and accelerating decision-making speeds.

Alex said: *"It was a pleasure to meet British troops and my US counterpart, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth in NTC Fort Irwin, USA. HM Forces were participating in a multinational demonstration with the United States and Australia."*

"With 17 British technologies deployed alongside the Ranger Regiment, the project underscored the importance of rapid data-sharing between allies on the battlefield."



GROT SPOT UPDATE

Since the last update, Alex has **reported a number of grot spots to CBC and GCC** including potholes, blocked drains and graffiti.

Following Alex's reports since the last update, the Council have:

- Removed **dead branches from a tree on Leckhampton Road**
- Removed **graffiti from wall on Hatherley Road**
- Repaired a **pothole outside the Municipal Offices**
- Repaired a **footway defect on Selkirk Street**
- Repaired a **road defect on Prestbury Road**

Alex has also reported the following issues and is awaiting an update:

- **Street light defect on Hatherley Road**
- **Blocked drain on Montpellier Grove**
- Potholes on **Hatherley Road, Bayshill Road, Gloucester Road, Arle Road Bridge, Cudnall Street, Western Court, Clevelands Drive, The Park, Grafton Road, Reddings Road**

If you see any problem areas in the town, please send details to Alex (alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk) and he will raise them with the Council.



OLD PATS TRIUMPH OVER GLOUCESTER OLD BOYS

Alex was in attendance at the heavily anticipated top of the table clash between Old Pats and Gloucester Old Boys at Everest Road.

Old Pats put in a convincing performance as they won 17-0.



GLOS BASED KIWA TRAINING IN UK HYDROGEN FIRST

Alex joined Laurence Robertson MP on a visit to Kiwa Training following the opening of its **local hydrogen production plant**.

In a first for the UK, Kiwa has designed and managed the build of the hydrogen production plant, which involves Steam Methane Reforming of natural gas, primarily from a local biogas source.

The knowledge gained is already proving useful to standards developers, market regulators and those looking to convert their own facilities to use bulk hydrogen.



ALEX BACKS NEW CHELTENHAM RESTAURANT

Alex was pleased to support the opening night of the brand-new **Restaurant Journey** in Cheltenham.

Restaurant Journey - which offers diners a 12-course 'journey of flavour' - will join Cheltenham's **many other wonderful restaurants** in supporting Cheltenham by **employing local people, using local suppliers and attracting visitors to the town.**

Writing on Facebook, Alex said:

"With Kennedy and Head Chef Jeff at the opening of the Journey restaurant in Cheltenham last night. They are such a talented and enthusiastic team, and they deserve to do really well. The food is AMAZING!

"Check them out if you can. They're located at the north end of the Bath Road, near the London Road."



ALEX CONTINUES TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO BOOST RAPE PROSECUTIONS

As Solicitor General, Alex introduced disclosure rule changes to help investigators bring rapists to justice.

Alex is continuing to support the Government's efforts to boost rape prosecutions and recently encouraged the Attorney General to reduce the redaction burden on police.

Alex said:

"It is fantastic news that the number of rape prosecutions is now 30% higher than it was in the last quarter pre covid. Does the Attorney General agree that, if we are going to continue that progress, we need to widen the pipeline of referrals from the police? In that endeavour, we need to ensure that the redaction burden is reduced so that it is proportionate, so that those cases are passed to the CPS and victims get the justice they deserve."

The Attorney General replied:

"I commend my hon. and learned Friend for his time as Solicitor General. I reiterate, as he has done, that since the last time I was a Law Officer a year-plus ago, the number has increased by 30%, as he rightly says, which is extremely impressive. The CPS has set out its priority areas under the victim transformation programme and we are going to work to those."





POPPY RIDE TO SUPPORT THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Every year, MPs and Lords participate in competition to cycle the furthest distance in five minutes in the 'Poppy Ride' to raise money and awareness for the Royal British Legion.

Alex was awarded with the Royal British Legion yellow jersey last year after he cycled the furthest out of the 62 participants.

This year it was won by the MP for Runnymede. Alex has pledged to restore Cheltenham's honour in 2023!



[Click the image above to watch Alex's question]

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER RECALLS LITFEST TRIP TO CHELTENHAM!

Alex was in the House of Commons during the Chancellor's emergency statement to urge him to build a strong economy and fair society.

Alex said:

"I warmly welcome the Chancellor's swift and decisive action today, but also the tone and, above all, the candour of his remarks. Does he agree that the best way in the long term to build a strong economy and a fair society for my constituents in Cheltenham, many of whom he met recently, is to repair the public finances in the short term? That is the Conservative way; that is what builds prosperity in the long term."

The Chancellor replied:

"Absolutely, and only a couple of weeks ago I was sitting in a café in Cheltenham having a cold sandwich with my hon. Friend. I want to thank him for his incredible articulacy in lobbying for the needs of the people of Cheltenham."



[Alex attended the campaign event in Parliament Square]

ALEX BACKS ME/CFS #MILLIONSMISSING AWARENESS DAY

Alex meets regularly with members of Gloucestershire's **ME/CFS Friendship Group** to support those who live with the disease. Since he was first elected in 2015, the profile of this cruel, debilitating condition has risen considerably - but Alex believes there is still work to do.

Having secured confirmation from the then-Health Secretary that appropriate ME/CFS research projects would be properly supported, Alex attended the #MillionsMissing day to discuss research projects and to show his support for sufferers.



[Alex speaking to local residents in the Court House]

WILLIAM HAGUE COMES TO CHELTENHAM

Alex was delighted to welcome William Hague to Cheltenham.

Lord Hague - who was in Cheltenham for the Literature Festival - spent time discussing the current political situation with Cheltonians at the Old Court House pub.

After he left university, Alex worked for a number of months as a speechwriter for William Hague, who at that time was Leader of the Opposition.



ALEX BACKS THE 'POSITIVE ABOUT DOWN'S SYNDROME' CAMPAIGN

Alex met with campaigners in Parliament to restate his **support for the 'Positive About Down's Syndrome' campaign.**

Ever since he met the Cotswold Down's Syndrome [Group](#) shortly after being elected in 2015, Alex has championed this cause. Alex at the time called the meeting in Reddings Community Centre "immensely affecting".

The 'Positive About Down's' Syndrome' campaign seeks to give young people with Down Syndrome **a voice to share their life-stories** as well as **inspiring and supporting parents and families of children with down syndrome.**

Writing on Facebook, Alex said:

"Wonderful to catch up with Milly in Parliament. Milly is such a powerful advocate for people with Down's Syndrome, and I was pleased to restate my support for the 'Positive About Down's Syndrome' campaign!"



"NEW AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES IN CHELTENHAM"

Alex was invited to join a delegation of cross-party MPs to meet with the Chief Negotiator of the UK-India Free Trade Agreement.

During the meeting, Alex expressed his support for the trade deal, stating that it could **unlock new and exciting opportunities for businesses and firms in Cheltenham**.

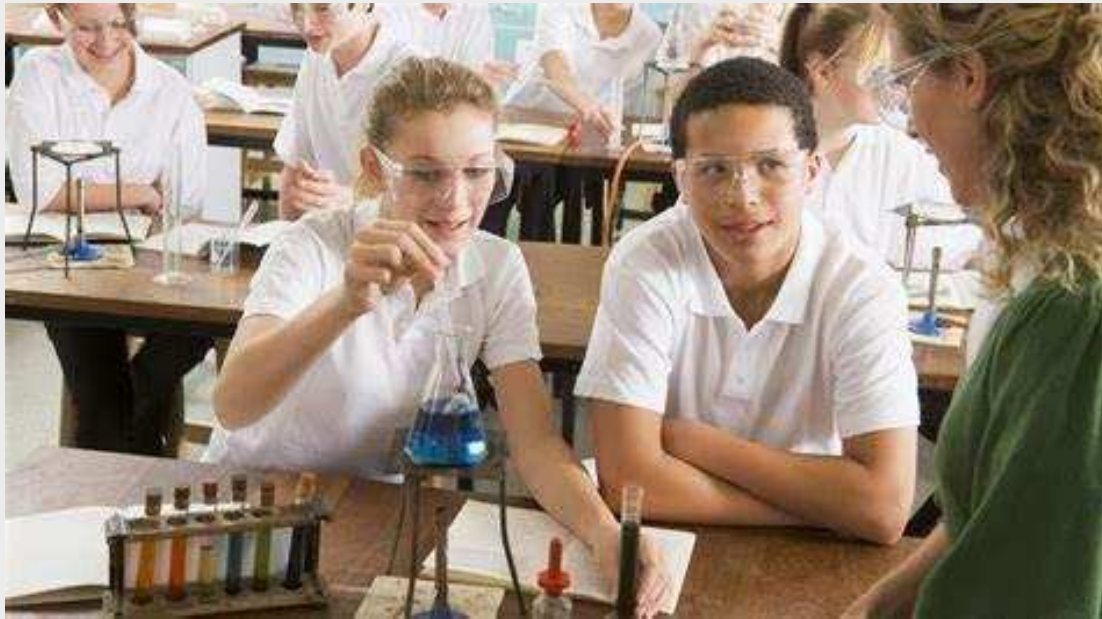
Alex has particularly championed the potential for expansion of legal services, worth over £20bn a year in exports - and a sector that the UK is well placed to progress further.



COTSWOLD MALE VOICE CHOIR OCTOBER SONGFEST

Alex was delighted to attend the Cotswold Male Voice Choir's October SongFest performance at St Matthew's Church on Clarence Street.

The choir sang a range of songs including including ELO's "Mr. Blue Sky", Coldplay's "Fix You" and The Proclaimers "500 Miles" as well as Welsh Male Voice Choir classics like "Gwahoddiad".



BOOST FOR EDUCATION IN CHELTENHAM AS TEACHER TRAINING BURSARIES INCREASE BY UP TO £10,000 A YEAR

Alex has welcomed news that graduates applying to train as teachers in high priority subjects will receive **increases to tax-free cash bursaries and scholarships** from next year.

Bursaries worth **£27,000** and scholarships worth **£29,000** will be available from September 2023 to draw talented trainees into the highest-priority **science, technology and mathematics (STEM) subjects**.

Alex said: "*We are extremely lucky to have such dedicated and talented teachers in Cheltenham and I welcome that the introduction of over £180 million of tax-free bursaries will ensure that we can continue to attract the brightest and the best graduates to the teaching profession.*"

ADDITIONAL UPDATES

ALSO SINCE THE LAST UPDATE, ALEX HAS:

- Held **constituency surgeries** to help constituents with casework, ranging from anti-social behaviour to visa problems
- Visited **Queen's Retreat** to discuss residents' concerns about **anti-social behaviour**
- Attended an **Eating Disorder event** in Parliament
- Discussed **sustainability in medicine** with a Cheltenham GP
- Attended **Cheltenham Parish Councils Collaboration Event** (part) at the Civil Service Club
- Attended the **Friends of Imperial Square Heritage and Conservation Inaugural Ceremony** - to mark the installation of the restored railings
- Attended the **Cheltenham Street Pastors' annual commissioning service (part)**
- Visited **Cheltenham Balagokulam** to celebrate Parliament Week
- Met with Kedell Worboys - **St Helena Government UK Representative**
- Attended a **World Menopause Day** event in Parliament
- Attended **Old Pats v Glos Old Boys** rugby match
- Attended a reception to mark **25 years of the Criminal Cases Review Commission**
- Attended **Diwali celebrations** in Cheltenham
- Attended a **Keep Counselling Confidential** Parliamentary event
- Attended a **UK Cryptoasset Business Council reception** in Parliament with constituents from the industry
- Attended the **Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts volunteers coffee morning**
- Attended a reception for **World Stroke Day**
- Spoke in a Westminster Hall Debate on **Sewage Discharge**
- Attended **Gloucestershire Academy of Music 40th Anniversary Celebration Concert**

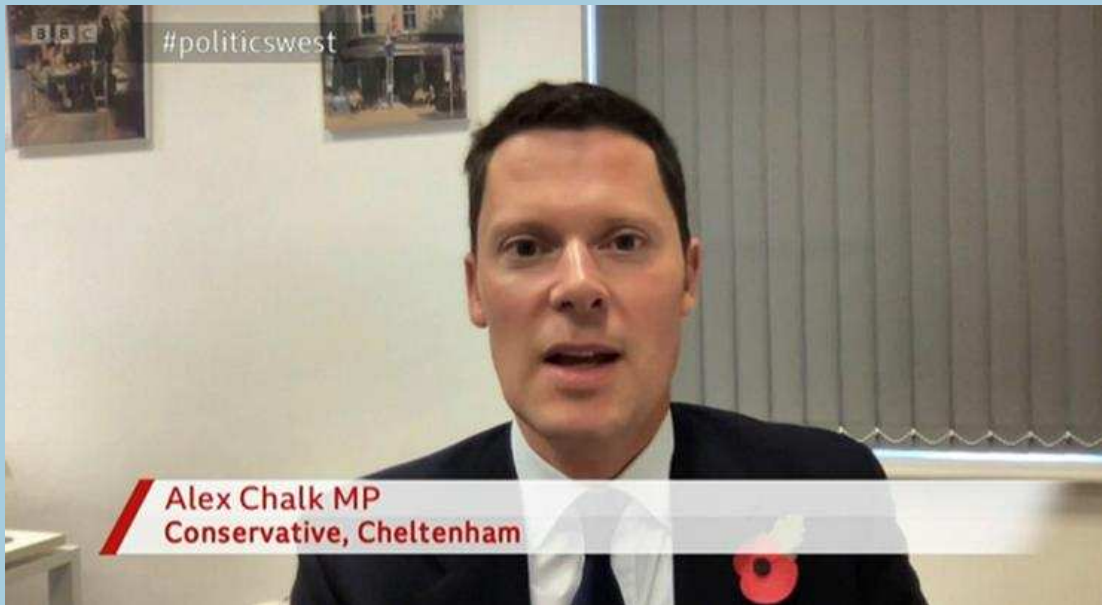
Received briefings from:

- **The Chancellor** about the economic situation
- **NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group**
- **The Foreign Secretary** about the situation in Ukraine
- **CBC's The Golden Valley Development**

IN THE MEDIA



[Alex being interviewed by Andrew Neil on Remembrance Sunday]



[Alex was interviewed by BBC Points West]



[Alex appeared on NewsNight]



[Alex was interviewed by SkyNews]



[Alex appeared on GB News]

SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:

Alex has: been interviewed on:

1. The Andrew Neil Show
2. Politics West
3. BBC Radio Four
4. SkyNews
5. BBC News
6. BBC Newsnight
7. BBC Radio Gloucestershire
8. ITV News
9. TalkTV.

He has also written three articles for the **Cheltenham Post and the Gloucestershire Echo**, in which he:

1. Expressed his surprise and disappointment at CBC's attempt to block investment zone plans. Read [HERE](#).
2. Argued that vulnerable passengers must not be left without access to an adequate bus service. Read [HERE](#)
3. Highlighted the contributions of Cheltonians to UK national security, on being appointed as Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence. Read [HERE](#).

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD



100 DAY COUNTDOWN FOR CUSTOMERS TO USE UP THEIR NON-BARDCODED DEFINITIVE STAMPS

There are now less than 100 days until non-barcode stamps cease to be a valid form of postage.

From 1 February 2023 barcode stamps (as pictured above), will be the only type of stamps valid for postage.

Royal Mail are encouraging customers to use up their non-barcode stamps before 1 February.

Alternatively, customers can exchange non-barcode stamps for barcode stamps by requesting a form [HERE](#) or phoning 03457 740740.

It is also possible to exchange them in person at the Cheltenham Delivery Office, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL50 4BB.



COBALT CHRISTMAS AUCTION

Cheltenham charity **Cobalt Health** - who provide diagnostic imaging to support the NHS - are holding a **Christmas Auction** to raise vital funds for a Teenage and Young Adults with Cancer Specialist Nurse.

Prizes including an overnight stay at a luxury hotel, beauty and spa gifts, sporting activities and artwork.

To support Cobalt Health and to enter the auction, please click [HERE](#).

USEFUL LOCAL CONTACTS

Gloucestershire County Council

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk

01452 425000

Cheltenham Borough Council

www.cheltenham.gov.uk

01242 262626

Age UK Gloucestershire

www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire

01452 422660

Gloucestershire Abuse Support

01452 726570

Citizens Advice Gloucestershire

01452 527202

GRASAC (Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre)

www.glosrasac.org

01452 305421

Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership

<https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/organisation/organisations-f-h/rskc-organisation-158/>



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